

Truck Farming to flower Growing: Urban Agriculture

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Like many people from Europe who came to the United States looking for a better life, immigrants from Luxembourg came and settled in the areas of Roger Park, Lake View, and Budlong. In those days farming was most important, especially to the Luxembourgers. They were very good farmers, so they were very happy that they found good land in this area to farm. A few prominent pioneers from among these early Luxembourgers were very successful and also helped their countrymen to settle and prosper in this area. One of these men was Nicholas Niles. Nicholas Niles came straight to Chicago. First, he worked in farming but soon he entered politics. He held different positions in government and helped many. Luxembourgers were very hard working people and also very intelligent people. They maintained a close community. They built their churches and were good family people. They created the Luxembourg Brotherhood of America, an organization which brought all Luxembourgers together and was very helpful in community affairs. The Luxembourgers also attracted other settlers to this area from Europe, such as the Germans and Swedes. Along with farming, other businesses sprang up in the area to accommodate the farming necessities. The first farming products were peas, beans, corn and other vegetables. During the Civil War the farmers started raising flowers, which were in great demand for funerals and by the relatives and friends. Then they started a system of greenhouse farming.

The Luxembourgers now developed a new way of farming. Greenhousing is everywhere in the area. Flowers have a very big market in Chicago. Many greenhouses were large, twenty-three by four hundred feet. They called them the houses of the Beauty Plants of America. Many of those houses were along the end of the Lincoln Avenue car line. Carnations were another flower in great demand. Many greenhouses of this kind were built by A.J. Budlong in the north area of Lawrence Avenue. The Budlong family was well organized. Their flowers from the greenhouse's large sections were sold widely.

The greenhouses were also heated in a special way from one central heating plant, the vacuum system and two-inch pipes being used. One unique feature of the heating system is the control of steam in the pipes. Seven pipes in each house were regulated by three valves and as many checks. One valve controls a single pipe, another two pipes and a third and fourth pipe. In this way any number of pipes from one to seven can be readily controlled. This also provides for a little greater heat at the cold ends of the houses, the greater number of pipes heated means a greater radiation from the heaters. Each house has an entirely independent system of pipes. To maintain as even a temperature at the ends as in the centers of the houses, the double ventilation system has been installed, each half being continuous in itself. The new range has been supplied with eight foot Garland gutters. These houses are built of cedar instead of the cypress that is usually preferred. The benches in the six new houses rest on the brick instead of posts, the former being more durable and economical. It is expected that each bench will last for at least eight years.

Besides the Budlong family, other families in the area were very successful in the greenhouse flower growing business. Some big names along Lincoln Avenue were John Muno,

Adam Zender and Peter Reinberg. All constructed big greenhouses for year-round flower cultivation.

As time went on, the area has developed. Homes and business grew in big numbers. The land got very expensive to be used for farming. Many of the old farmers went into different professions. Farming was to remain in the hearts of the Luxembourgers. They looked in the areas northwest of Chicago market. They started moving to the areas of Lincolnwood, Morton Grove, Niles, and Des Plaines.

Here they bought large pieces of land and built their new land farmhouses. These areas also became expensive real estate and have been developed into great communities with people of different nationalities and backgrounds. We can see everywhere many names of streets, towns, parks, and institutions identify their Luxembourgers presence.

In 1920 the Luxembourgers in Chicago numbered 5,080. In 1904, Luxembourgers on the Ridge North side built an impressive new building for Old St. Henry's Church. St. Henry's Church is considered to be the mother church for all Roman Catholic churches north of Irving Park, including Evanston.

The World War I memorial was in Chicago. That memorial was conceived in St. Henry's on November 27, 1919, to honor three young parishioners that were killed in actions.

In short, the Luxembourgers were not left behind. For example, they were very proud of the Rogers Park Soccer Football club. They had become full-hearted American citizens participating in social and economic activities and also in the political field. The Luxembourgers never forgot their old country either. [From A.T. Andreas, *History of Cook County Illinois from the Earliest Period to the Present Time*; Dale Chihuly, *Chihuly, Gardens and Glass*, Boston: Cortstein press, 1993; Bedell Clark, *The Lake view Sage* 1937-1985; William B. Eerdmas, *Ethnic Chicago*; "Luxembourgers in Chicago", Sept. 19, 2003, <http://www.eskimo.com/~lisanne/>; Arthur Mann, *Ethnic Chicago*; Rogers Park Historical Society, <http://entertainment.metromix.chicagotribune.com>; Sept. 19, 2003; Richard J. Witry, Luxembourg Brotherhood of America.]